



Date: March 12, 2015
To: Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
From: Sandra Bulmer, Ph.D.
Interim Dean, School of Health and Human Services, Southern
Connecticut State University
RE: Support of Senate Bill 898,
An Act Concerning Professional Doctoral Degree Programs

Good morning members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

For the record I am Dr. Sandra Bulmer, Interim Dean for the School of Health and Human Services at Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) in New Haven. I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 898, *An Act Concerning Professional Doctoral Degree Programs*.

Our state institutions of higher learning have a sacred obligation to provide affordable educational opportunities that are linked to labor market needs. In recent years there has been an increase in demand for doctoral credentials, specifically in the fields of healthcare and social services. The professional practice doctorate offers an alternative to research oriented degree programs. Unlike the Ph.D. credential that prepares students for research positions, practice doctorates uniquely prepare students for teaching, advanced practice, and leadership positions in a variety of job settings. The Doctor of Social Work (DSW) is one such example and Southern Connecticut State University would like to offer such a degree in the near future. Other examples include the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) and Doctor of Public Health (Dr.P.H.).

The Doctor of Social Work (DSW) degree program in particular would be a tremendous asset to the State of Connecticut at this time. A report from the National Association of Social Workers (2013) suggests that 1) there needs to be an emphasis on advancing practice/clinical knowledge and skills in the social work profession; 2) traditional social work Ph.D. programs do not teach social work students in ways that prepare them for direct practice; and 3) creation of the DSW will create a promotion ladder for social workers which will allow them to move up in their organizations and realize greater pay. The DSW credential will help to raise standards of practice in fields such as child welfare, education, and aging. In addition, clients, government, insurance companies, hospitals, clinics and other stakeholders in health and mental health services are demanding higher levels of competency, accountability, and evidence of the cost-effectiveness of services. Social workers with DSW credentials will be able to provide this leadership.

Ph.D. programs train researchers and the University of Connecticut has been very effective in providing these educational opportunities, in a wide range of disciplines, for residents in the State. For professionals who wish to advance their practice skills or obtain advanced administrative and leadership training, the Ph.D. does not meet their needs. Additionally, Ph.D. programs are typically offered as full-time educational programs and are not accessible to working professionals.

Passage of this legislation would allow Southern Connecticut State University and the other CSU campuses to offer degree programs such as the DSW. This legislation will result in the development of affordable and accessible options for Connecticut residents to further their education in ways that allow them to advance their careers and meet workforce needs in our state.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide this testimony.